

Scotch Broom Gall Mite: A New Natural Enemy to California. Scott Oneto,
University of California Cooperative Extension

The broom gall mite has recently taken residence on the invasive plant Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) in California. Scotch broom was first introduced into North America as an ornamental and for erosion control back in the mid 1800's. The bright yellow flowers and rapid growth made it a desirable ornamental; however its ability to out-compete native plants and form dense stands has also made it one of California's worst wildland weeds.

Controlling Scotch broom hasn't been an easy task. The shrubs can form dense monotypic stands that make it difficult for hand removal. The shrubs also grow on steep terrain making accessibility difficult for either chemical or non-chemical control. As a mostly wildland weed, chemical control is not always an option especially in sensitive areas and on sometimes on federal lands. Previous attempts at biological control have been only partially effective.

Native to Europe, the Scotch broom gall mite was first found on Scotch broom in the Tacoma, Washington and Portland, Oregon regions in 2005. Since that time the mite has become established throughout western Washington and Oregon and even into parts of British Columbia. Up until 2013, the mite had been found as far south as Ashland, Oregon with no occurrences in California. In 2014, the mite was found in the central portion of the Sierra Nevada range in El Dorado County, California.

The mite forms small growths on the plants buds, greatly reducing Scotch broom's ability to grow and reproduce. The mite is considered to be an ideal biological control agent due its largely specialized feeding habits and the debilitating damage they cause to plants. In some areas, the gall mite has even killed large stands of broom.

Further research is being conducted to understand the potential impact the mite might have on Scotch broom populations throughout the state. For more information on the mite, visit; <http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu>